

**STATE SENATOR • HANSEN CLARKE • 1ST DISTRICT**

# **Clarke Press Release**

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## **SEN. CLARKE PLEDGES OPPOSITION TO NEW DEATH PENALTY BILL**

**DETROIT DEMOCRAT TO WORK WITH RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS  
LEADERS TO DEFEAT MEASURE**

LANSING- In an impassioned speech on the Michigan Senate floor today, State Senator Hansen Clarke (D-Detroit) pledged to lead the opposition to a new push by death penalty proponents to reinstate capital punishment in Michigan. Sen. Clarke's statements were in response to actions by Rep. Larry Julian (R-Lennon) who submitted for introduction Wednesday a constitutional amendment that would end Michigan's 158-year-old ban on the death penalty.

"The decision on who should or shouldn't live is a decision best left up to our Creator," said Sen. Clarke. "A death penalty is no deterrent to the mentally ill or to those under the influence of severe drug and alcohol abuse, which is the majority of all homicide cases."

Sen. Clarke pledged to lead an effort to organize a statewide coalition of religious and civil rights leaders to defeat the new measure. Civil rights groups and religious organizations like the Michigan Catholic Conference were instrumental in defeating a similar capital punishment measure in 1999.

"As we saw recently in Illinois, our criminal justice system is not infallible and to hand out life and death based on an imperfect system is immoral," said Sen. Clarke. "The death penalty has

never been proven to be an effective deterrent. In fact, studies show that states that do not employ the death penalty have lower murder rates than states that do.”

In Illinois, it was discovered that prosecutors had moved ahead with disregard for evidence that may have cleared some defendants of charges. George Ryan, who was Governor at the time the concerns were raised, suspended all executions in Illinois until they could be addressed.

EDITORS NOTE: An audio sound file of Sen. Clarke commenting on his opposition to capital punishment can be accessed at: <http://www.senate.mi.gov/Audio%20Clips/01-021904.mp3>